



## Has Ruth-Ann from Kensington and Chelsea College got The Voice?

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Monday 16 April 2012  
www.feweek.co.uk

### John Widdowson



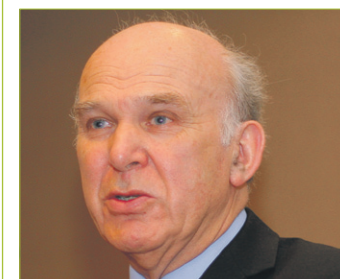
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# The SFA just keeps giving

**FE Week Exclusive**

Nick Summers

@SummersNicholas

## Nearly 300 colleges unexpectedly receive £23 million to be spent before August 2012

Colleges are sharing an additional £23m in Discretionary Learner Support (DLS) funding, which will need to be spent before the end of this academic year.

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) has revealed that 284 providers, primarily FE colleges, were given the additional funding last month ahead of their profile payment in April.

The extra in-year allocations are the latest in a series of SFA giveaways, which include redundancy packages, the Growth and Innovation Fund and additional funding to target NEETs, reported by *FE Week* last November.

A spokesperson for the SFA told *FE Week*: "The additional funds were distributed to those providers who reported in their February mid-year returns that they expected their end of year performance to be 97 per cent or above."

The SFA say the extra funding has been redistributed from the Learner Support budget, including the Professional & Career Development Loans, Adult Learning Grant and the Residential Support Scheme, to "support providers with

potential budget pressures".

Among the successful recipients are Westminster Kingsway College, which has received around £250,000, South Staffordshire College with £71,000 and City of Bristol College, with more than £300,000.

Andy Wilson, principal of Westminster Kingsway College, said the additional in-year allocation was welcome but also completely unexpected.

"You can understand that there might be a few tens of thousands swimming around but when you talk in those sorts of figures coming completely out of the blue, it's a big surprise," said Mr Wilson.

"It's always welcome to get new money and no-one is ever going to turn it down, but just getting that sort of sum of money, in an unplanned way late in the year, just isn't doing anybody any favours, wherever it has come from."

DLS is used by general FE colleges and sixth form colleges to help students aged 19 or above, who are often facing financial hardship, with the cost of learning.

The funding can be spent on a variety of support including travel

costs, childcare, course-related equipment and accommodation costs.

Mr Wilson said Westminster Kingsway College would be using the extra money to fund fee remission for a number of courses which learners can enrol on this term.

"It's very, very flexible in what it can be spent on," Mr Wilson said.

"There aren't too many restrictions on it, but if you add up how much you're going to spend in some travel costs it doesn't come to very much out of a quarter of a million pounds in a term.

"You can't get it out the door to spend it on a lot of smaller pots, so in the time that's been given you've just got to spend it on substantial things."

Graham Morley, principal of South Staffordshire College, says he doesn't think there will be any significant issues with spending the money.

"What this will enable us to do is increase the in-class support, get more equipment and materials and everything that we would normally do at the back end of the year, which will help learners prepare

for exams, all of that sort of stuff," Mr Morley said.

"We will be able to do more of what we are already doing, so I don't think it is going to be a big problem for us or anybody else to spend it to be honest."

The South Staffordshire College principal said he was happy to receive the extra in-year allocation, even though it was unforeseen for by the sector.

"Yes, you can argue we should have had it earlier on, and we should have had the proper allocation, then we could manage the funds properly and that's absolutely fine, it's laudable and it's a good argument," he said.

"But having said that I guess the SFA could have taken an alternative approach and given the money back to government and made themselves look good.

"So in a sense I'm glad they've given it to us."

Concerns have also been raised over the amount of SFA under-spend being advertised to subcontractors through the social networking site LinkedIn.

Read the full article on page 3.



Make sure to read our Apprenticeships supplement, free with this issue, produced in partnership with Tribal

inside...





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M: 0783 7769 411



Learning & Skills Events,  
Consultancy and Training Ltd  
161-165 Greenwich High Road  
London SE10 8JA  
T: 020 8123 4778  
E: [news@feweek.co.uk](mailto:news@feweek.co.uk)

# Criticism and restructures as Ofsted grades plummet

**Nick Reinis**  
*@fenickr*

Three further education colleges have suffered setbacks after receiving the lowest possible inspection grades.

Reports by education regulator Ofsted, each published on March 30, show 'inadequate' reports for Macclesfield College and City of Wolverhampton College. The third to receive the grade, as previously revealed by *FE Week*, was Lambeth College, also formally published on March 30.

Back in June 2007, Macclesfield College was graded as 'outstanding', which made their most recent inspection report a shock for the principal designate Simon Andrews, who takes over at the college on August 1.

Mr Andrews said problems with the 14-19 diploma, which the college has "moved away" from doing, had affected their 16-18 provision, before hitting out at the focus the inspectors during their visit to the college.

He said: "We felt we were similar, but Ofsted came in with a focus which was almost exclusively on 16-18 provision, which is about a third of the college provision."

He later added: "The report is full of contradictions. They've based judgement on a diploma we only ran for two years."

Improvements at the college will now be formed in an action plan, compiled with the Skills Funding Agency, and a development plan with LSIS. The governing body has had a shake-up, with a new vice-chairman and the chairman will step down next year.

Ofsted will also revisit the college in six months for a monitoring report, before another inspection in 12 months.

Mr Andrews said: "They recognised in the last 16 to 20 months the college has made significant improvements. We are looking forward to Ofsted coming back and showing them that we are not inadequate."

Meanwhile, Ian Millard, the principal at City of Wolverhampton College, has moved to reassure the college's students following their

'inadequate' grade. Their latest grade is a reduction from a 'good' at their previous inspection in February 2008.

Mr Millard said: "I appreciate that students and their parents will, quite rightly, be concerned by the report. However, I would like to reassure them that we are already taking decisive action to address many of the issues raised and are confident we can overcome them."

He added: "The success rates referred to in the report look at how many students successfully complete their course compared to how many were enrolled at the beginning.

"In these tough economic times we are finding that some of our learners are having to drop out due to financial reasons, which has an impact on our success rates."

Mr Millard said they will introduce measures to encourage students to stay on, such as additional learning support and grants for those with financial pressures.

Lambeth College, meanwhile, has quashed local news reports that all teachers have been handed redundancy notices in the wake of their 'inadequate' report. The college is undertaking a management restructure, which would affect 43 members of staff and salary reductions to a further 24 workers.

If the proposals go through a consultation, staff who earn £41,000 or more will receive a pay cut up to six per cent, whereas staff on the lower end will receive a cut starting at 3.5 per cent. A statement from the college, released to *FE Week*, reads: "No redundancy notices have been handed to staff and the restructure is of management teams, not tutors.

"None of the colleges other 500 staff (including teachers and business support) are affected by these proposals.

"There is therefore no truth whatsoever that all college staff have been issued with redundancy notices and the college deeply regrets that such an alarming story has been published without the facts being checked directly with the college.

"The purpose of the restructure is to enable the college to focus closely on raising standards and performance within the college."

## *FE Week news in brief*

### Innovation Code live

The Innovation Code drawn up by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) is now live.

The code, which consists of six learning aims, will enable providers to claim funding while simultaneously developing a programme or qualification for their local area.

The SFA says providers will be able to use the code to respond "quickly and innovatively" to gaps in local employment and skills shortages.

The code is one of the commitments featured in "New Challenges, New Chances" following the recommendations in Baroness Sharp's "Dynamic Nucleus; Colleges at the Heart of Local Communities" report.

### Community Learning

The prospectus for the Community Learning Trust pilots has been published by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

The government will be accepting between 10 and 15 pilots to be introduced from August 2012

SFA Update Issue 103 reads: "This is an opportunity for people involved in volunteering, learning clubs, informal learning at work and online learning, as well as more structured learning, to be part of their local application to become a Community Learning Trust.

"All the pilots will be expected to develop a robust income-generation strategy and show how local people are taking a lead."

The pilots will be supported by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE).

### EO tender deadline

The first round of bidding has closed for the Employer Ownership of Skills pilot.

Charlie Mayfield, chairman of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), uploaded a personal message to YouTube on April 1 encouraging bids before the deadline last Friday.

The Employer Ownership of Skills Pilot offers all employers in England direct access to up to £250 million over the next two years.

# SFA college account data 'appears incorrect'

**Nick Reinis**  
*@fenickr*

College account figures have been removed from the Skill Funding Agency's website little more than a week after they were published.

The figures, for 2010/11, were published on April 3 but by April 12 had been taken down. A message on the Agency's website read: "This file has been temporarily removed to verify some of the figures. It will be replaced as soon as possible."

The Agency, in a statement released to *FE Week*, said the data was provided by colleges, but one raised inaccuracies.

It read: "It was brought to our attention by a college that a small number of its figures appear to be incorrect on the collated spreadsheet;

the spreadsheet has therefore been temporarily removed to verify these figures. As we know that sector rely on this data we wanted to reassure ourselves that the data is correct."

Prior to the removal of the accounts on April 12, figures published for principals' salaries in the same documents had also come under scrutiny from the sector.

*FE Week* used the spreadsheet to publish a list of the ten highest paid principals in 2010/11, but were contacted by a number of colleges to say figures were inaccurate.

A statement from Loughborough College said: "The salary for the principal of Loughborough College for 2010/11 reported as £242k in *FE Week*, 3rd April 2012, is incorrect.

"This figure (242k) represents the total salary for 2010/11 for the three senior postholders of the college."

The salary published for the principal of Barnfield College was also said to be inaccurate.

"Pete Birkett is chief executive and principal of the Barnfield Federation, which is made up of more than Barnfield College alone," a spokesperson said.

"The Federation consists of an existing four academies, three subsidiary companies, the College and five new academies who will be joining the Federation before September."

The spokesperson added: "The turnover for the Federation is circa £60 million.

"There is a shared contribution towards the salary shown, so the figures quoted should be viewed from a Federal perspective.

"Within the accounts there is a qualifying statement explaining this."

The correct salary for Mr Birkett is £193,000, with an additional £15,000 in benefits.

# NAS Quality Action Plan a 'living document'

**Nick Summers**

**@SummersNicholas**

An internal document detailing how the government will improve the quality of the apprenticeship programme has been published by the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS).

The Quality Action Plan created by NAS includes a number of measures to improve the content and delivery of frameworks, focusing on IT and customer service provision in particular.

Planned actions include an updated Delivery Model Quality Statement, previously published last August, to try and make sure providers understand and incorporate minimum standards.

The document later says the government will publish new guidance on Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATA).

It states: "Innovative delivery models have increased the number of smaller employers engaged in the Apprenticeship programme,

but they have the potential to mask poor practice by training providers and colleges – we will publish our expectations for ATA arrangements, (and any other collaborative and partnership models) to ensure compliance with all elements of our delivery standards."

Apprenticeships in IT and customer service featured heavily in the Quality Action Plan recommendations.

The document says the NAS will be reviewing the IT User and Customer Service frameworks and publishing their findings to the sector, while the SFA will be carrying out a "thematic review of provision" after the Delivery Model Quality Statement is issued, starting with the IT sector.

In the Quality Action Plan the NAS also admits that the interpretation of the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE) is "inconsistent" across the sector.

"We will work with the Alliance of Sector Skills Councils to review and update the guidance and documentation on developing SASE compliant frameworks," it states.

The Department for Business, Innovation

and Skills (BIS) recently announced a new 12 month minimum duration for all apprenticeships, starting from August this year.

The policy update follows concerns about short duration programmes, some delivered in as little as 12 weeks, by private training providers.

The Quality Action Plan says they will publish a statement following their review of short apprenticeships, which will detail "lessons learned and the action we have taken".

A NAS spokesperson told *FE Week* last December: "The review of short provision provided some of the content and direction for our Quality Action Plan.

"During 2012, we will work with the Skills Funding Agency, Sector Skills Councils, and other partners across the sector to implement each of the recommendations in the Quality Action Plan, including those on short duration Apprenticeships."

The Quality Action Plan also suggests that where any apprentice is in the workplace for less than 30 hours per week, the overall duration of the apprenticeship should be extended

appropriately.

The information, which expands on the definitive 30 hours stated on the NAS website, will be issued in "specific guidance" to colleges, training providers and employers.

Other measures include publishing new guidance on when colleges and training providers should be claiming a reduced amount of funding, as well as a review of minimum levels of performance.

"The Apprenticeship funding claimed is not always reduced to reflect actual delivery patterns," the Quality Action Plan states.

"We will issue more robust guidance on where colleges and training providers should claim a reduced rate."

The internal document, which includes no dates for implementation, was called for by the skills minister John Hayes following the introduction of statutory standards for apprenticeships.

A NAS spokesperson told *FE Week* the Quality Action Plan is "intended to operate as a living document" and will be updated and amended as new issues emerge.

## Subcontracting and social media

**Nick Summers**

**@SummersNicholas**

An "urgent review" of sub-contracting has been called for by the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP).

Graham Hoyle, chief executive of the AELP, has written to the skills minister John Hayes recommending a full investigation of current sub-contracting arrangements.

Issue 567 of the AELP Countdown reads: "Recent analysis by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) of the extent of subcontracting within the FE system has given rise to a series of questions regarding the pros and cons of this delivery mechanism.

"A more accurate understanding of actual delivery is clearly necessary."

The call follows instances of undelivered funding from the SFA being advertised openly to sub-contractors through the social networking site LinkedIn.

Neptune Solutions, a brokerage company which helps lead providers team up with sub-contractors, has been offering "immediate" funding to providers on a number of discussion threads on the Apprenticeships England group.

"AELP has been receiving reports from members of sub-contracting approaches from colleges looking at significant underspends with the final quarter of 2011-12 on the horizon," An AELP spokesperson told *FE Week*.

"This is one of the reasons why we want the practice reviewed, because it is important that any new sub-contracting arrangements are made with due diligence undertaken."

Elena Ryabusha, managing director at Qdos Training Ltd, is one of many training providers which have responded to the advertisements on LinkedIn.

Commenting on one of the discussion threads in March, she said: "We are a prime contractor and we have funding spare for March starts."

The behaviour has raised concerns over much how due diligence is being carried out by prime contractors who enter subcontracting arrangements at short notice.

Scott Upton, vice principal of Sandwell College, told *FE Week*: "It is a little disappointing that a small minority of members are using the site for 'blind dating' for the purposes of setting up sub-contracts with very short lead-ins.

"Offers of funding for starts in the same month leave virtually no time for due diligence between potential partners."

He added: "This would seem to be flying in the face of the current push for tighter risk management of contracts between providers.

"Hopefully these practices will not proliferate and will be self-policed by the many committed members of the site."

Matt Cheetham, director of risk management at RSM Tenon, added: "The rise in use of social media to link potential sub-contractors with colleges and other training providers is not unsurprising.

"However, as with any partnership, there is no substitute for a robust due diligence process before entering into the contract, and close monitoring subsequently of the quality of delivery and compliance with the funding rules.

"As auditors, we have seen too many times the financial and reputational damage that can occur from entering into contracts that, with hindsight, really were 'too good to be true.'"

Geoff Russell, chief executive of the SFA, has defended the behaviour on LinkedIn and said any alternative to an open market system would offer the government less value for money.

"If you look at some of the respondents to the post on LinkedIn, there are quite a few good providers," Mr Russell told *FE Week*.

"But clearly, in a market system, there will always be the risk that a small number of participants try to take undue advantage and go for short term profits rather than a reasonable, long term return by delivering quality training."



### Upcoming Webinars

**Date: Tuesday 17th April 2012 : 3pm**  
**Topic: SFA Funding Rules for 2012/13**  
**Duration: 30mins + 15mins for questions**  
**Cost: Free of charge**

**Date: Friday 27th April 2012 : 10am**  
**Topic: Apprenticeship funding**  
**Duration: Two hours**  
**Cost: £95 + VAT**

**Date: Monday 30th April 2012 : 10am**  
**Topic: Shadow funding calculations**  
**Duration: Two hours**  
**Cost: £95 + VAT**

**Date: Tuesday 8th May 2012 : 3pm**  
**Topic: Apprenticeship funding**  
**Duration: Two hours**  
**Cost: £95 + VAT**

**Lsect webinars delivered by Nick Linford, author of The hands-on guide to post-16 funding, Managing Director of Lsect & Managing Editor of FE Week**

**To sign up go online at: [lsect.co.uk/webinars](http://lsect.co.uk/webinars)**



FE Week investigates latest funding announcements from the Skills Funding Agency

# SFA funding allocations for 2012/13

At the end of March the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) sent providers "final funding statements for all Agency-funded providers for the 2012/13 contracting year, for each of the following Agency budget lines:

- ~ Adult Skills Budget
- ~ Apprenticeships for 16-18-year-olds
- ~ Community Learning (formally known as the Adult Safeguarded Learning, or ASL)
- ~ Additional Learning Support (ALS)
- ~ Discretionary Learner Support (DLS)."

The briefing note outlines how limits have been used to set Adult Skills Budget allocations. It states: "To provide stability and limit change at individual provider level between allocations in 2011/12 and 2012/13, a 'floor' and 'ceiling' limit was applied (see right). The floor was not applied in a small number of cases, where circumstances indicated that the allocation needed to be rebased in 2012/13 below the floor level."

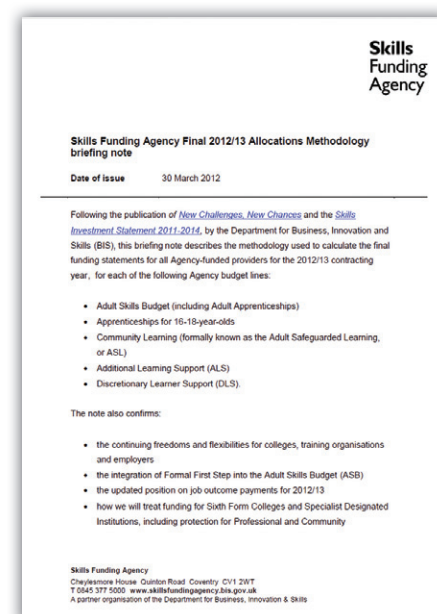
For 16-18 apprenticeship provision "baselines have been multiplied by a national factor (106.3 per cent) to ensure that provider-level allocations remain within budget, but reflect the overall increase in the 16-18 apprenticeship budget."

The guidance also makes it clear

that despite the rapid growth in 25+ apprenticeships a greater priority for 19-24 year-olds is expected.

The Agency "will monitor the pattern and volume of 25+ Apprenticeship delivery in-year and will not award any growth for 25+ Apprenticeship provision."

Allocation methodology	Classroom and other workplace	19+ Apprenticeships
Provider baseline	Mid-year forecast or 2011/12 Maximum Contract Level after quarter 2	
Percentage change	6.8% less	No change
Ceiling limit applied	100 per cent of 2011/12 allocation	
Floor limit applied	75 per cent of 2011/12 allocation	



Link: <http://tinyurl.com/cu4u8v7>

# Funding rules for 2012/13, version 1

The first version of the Funding Rules for 2012/13 have been published by the SFA.

The new rulebook, which has removed all guidance notes and supporting documentation used in previous years, includes updated guidance on charging financial contributions and fees, minimum durations for apprenticeships and job outcome payments.

The SFA has said it will be issuing an updated version of the document in May, which will include all of the supporting audit evidence requirements.

The foreword of the document reads: "The document published in May will also give us the opportunity to make adjustments where areas of clarification are needed, particularly those where the sector thinks any specific rules could be made clearer."

"This supports the Agency's stated aims

of reducing bureaucracy for employers and providers, simplifying the funding system and improving the way we communicate with the sector."

The document says that in instances where the SFA has fully-funded a learner's programme, providers are not allowed to make compulsory charges for either the learner or employer.

Learning activity covered by the ruling includes examination fees, the cost of materials, registration and assessment fees.

The Funding Rules for 2012/13 also show a division in the funding age groups at level 2 and level 3.

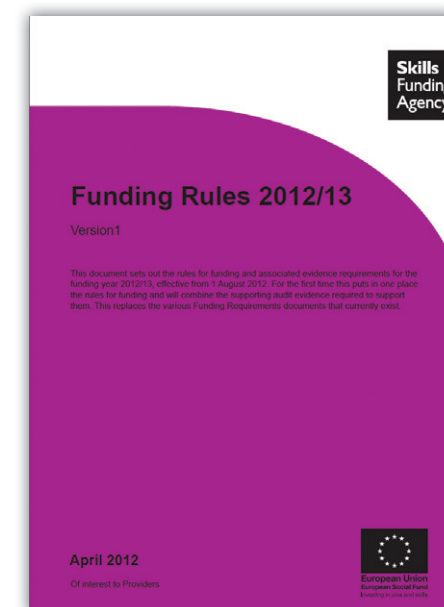
Two tables on page 83 and 84 show that for the next academic year, learners aged 19-23 will be fully funded for their first level 2 and co-funded for classroom based learning if they are aged 24 or above.

However, learners can be fully funded for their first level 3 up to the age of 24 and will only be co-funded for classroom based learning if they are aged 25 or above.

The new 95 page rulebook also expands upon the new 12 month minimum duration for all age apprenticeships announced by skills minister John Hayes MP.

Paragraph 84 reads: "Providers must not enter an expected length of duration of fewer than twelve months and will not be paid the achievement element of a 16-18 apprenticeship with a duration of fewer than twelve months in any circumstances."

The SFA also say they will be piloting job outcomes funding in the 2012/13 funding year, using existing funding models and a ten per cent job outcome funding "where an eligible learner leaves and enters work without achievement of the learning aim."



Link: <http://tinyurl.com/d93yyhu>

# Matrix rates and shadow funding reports

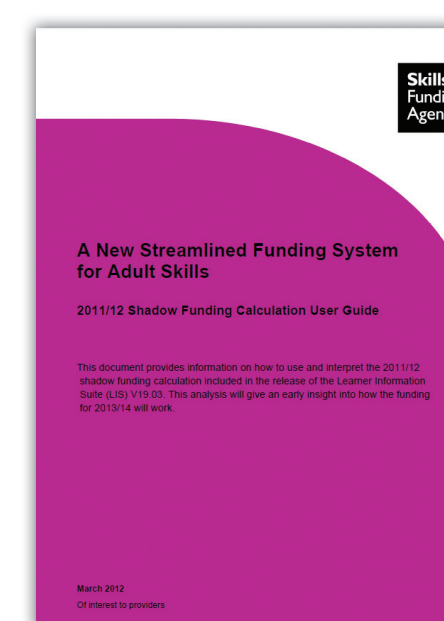
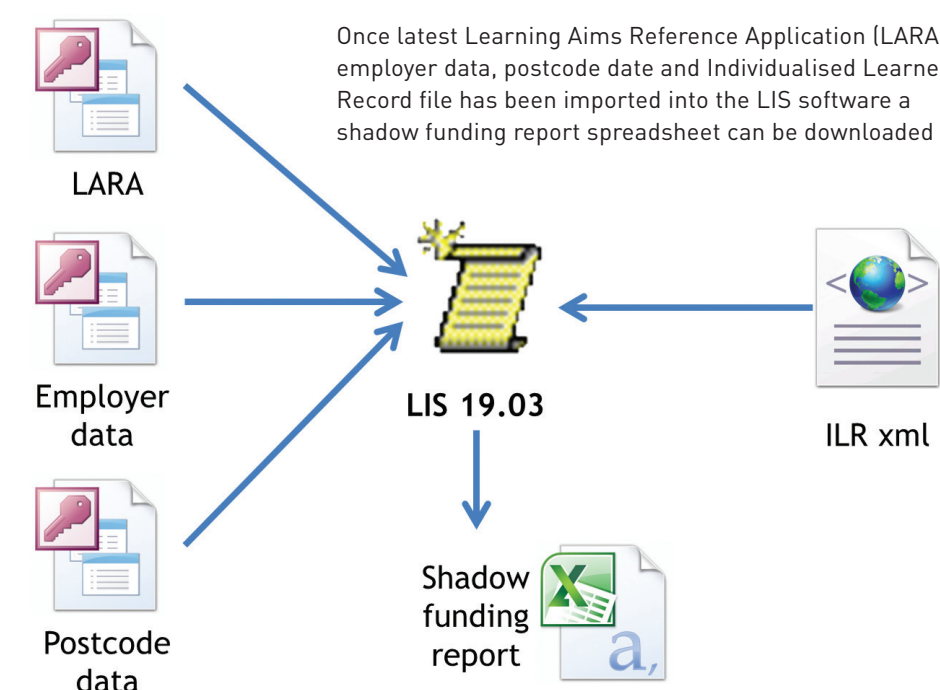
The SFA has published technical guidance outlining how qualification funding rates and the national funding formula will be applied in 2013/14.

To support the change the Data Service have released version 19.03 of the Learner Information Suite (LIS) to include shadow funding calculations.

The software applies the qualification funding rates from the new 'simplified' rates matrix to learner data in 2011/12 and produces a spreadsheet report listing all the enrolments to provide an "early insight into how the funding for 2013/14 will work."

However, the User Guidance (see right) states that the funding for many enrolments are not being calculated and others may yet change (such as very short qualifications).

Providers are encouraged to provide feedback to [FundingSystemsTeam@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk](mailto:FundingSystemsTeam@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk)



Link: <http://tinyurl.com/8695r83>



## FE Week profile

## John Widdowson ~ his story

Janet Murray

@Jan\_Murray

## The Principal of New College Durham talks to FE Week

Born into a family of mill workers, machine operators and motor mechanics, John Widdowson jokes that he is the first in his family who hasn't had to work for a living. Growing up in Lancashire, he was a studious child, who - much to the despair of his father and grandfather - was absolutely "useless" at working with his hands.

Now principal and chief executive of New College Durham, the young Widdowson had his heart set on a career in law, and after O and A levels at Audenshaw Grammar School (a selective boys' school in Manchester), went up to Durham University, where he did a law degree, followed by a legal practice course and MBA.

**"It didn't take me long to think that principals of colleges do have a lot of responsibility but also a lot of opportunity to effect change, which you don't get in many places"**

He fell into education by accident, after taking a teaching job at a college to earn some extra cash - and was hooked immediately. He recalls: "It was very odd coming from a post-graduate business school into an environment where I was teaching girls on a secretarial course who had left school at 15 and trying to get them to try and think outside the box.

"Then there was a group of lads who were working for the post office whose job was moving mail bags on and off trains - just realising that after whatever they'd done at school they still couldn't read or write properly, and having to cope with that while trying to get them to do something else - it was just a big challenge."

Teaching appealed to his keen sense of social justice and offered pace and challenge, he says. "Young students, particularly those less able, make a lot of demands on people and you have to be intellectually and emotionally right up for it. It's much more adrenaline-generating being in a classroom...even in a court of law you are never under quite the same pressure."

Having abandoned his plans for a career

in law, Widdowson quickly rose through the ranks, before becoming a principal at just 42, making him one of the youngest college leaders in the country at the time. But he never set out to become a college leader, he says. As he became more experienced, he simply realised that leading a college would offer him the professional challenges he needed.

"I know that sounds very pretentious and all the rest of it but it's one of the few jobs where you can do that and therefore it is a job that is still worth aspiring to," he says. "It didn't take me long to think that yes, principals of colleges do have a lot of responsibility but also a lot of opportunity to effect change, which you don't get in many places."

What appealed about the job - and what still motivates him now - is the variety. He might be visiting a local school, negotiating sensitive human resources issues or making multi-million pound financial decisions - all in the course of a single day. And because "colleges never close," there are constant challenges, he says.

"There is always something going on, even in the depths of the summer holidays. You finish one academic year and you have the A-level results coming out in mid-August, GCSEs at the end of August, so the cycle starts again...and you can do all that planning and then something comes up that is more pressing to deal with. You have got to like that sort of dynamic environment; it's what makes it interesting."

Widdowson is particularly proud of college's capital rebuild project (which involved selling one campus and building a new one from the ground up) and the links it has made with local schools. New College Durham now sponsors two local academies - both with complex histories and big capital build projects attached to them.

He is also passionate about the role FE colleges can play in delivering higher education courses and chairs the Mixed Economy Group (a working group of 34 colleges that offer higher education courses in addition to their FE provision) and the widening access and participation committee for the higher education funding body HEFCE.

The biggest challenge facing the sector at the moment is financial uncertainty, he says. The impact of funding cuts - in particular the demise of the EMA - has hit young people where it hurts. "Now you have got to really convince them [young people] of the benefits of getting qualifications and sticking with it.

"We have a large NEET group and we are constantly trying to find different ways to engage them and find different sorts of courses to get them on. And we have to constantly refresh that, because what worked three or four years ago may not work now."

But if he has learned one thing during his 30 years in further education, it is that,



as a leader, certain things are out of your control. What matters is how you respond. "Colleges reflect the real world. You can't always manage the environment outside the college, and if that's volatile and things are happening out there...they are not ivory towers. And so as a senior leader in a college you have to lead that response."

**"In a college like this you value every level of achievement; whether an academic getting an honour's degree or it's a special needs student who learns to live independently"**

What continues to inspire him, he says, is seeing students succeed - some of them,

against the odds. "You have only got to see our graduation ceremonies and see people who have made a significant change in their lives through education...and if the college wasn't there that wouldn't have happened.

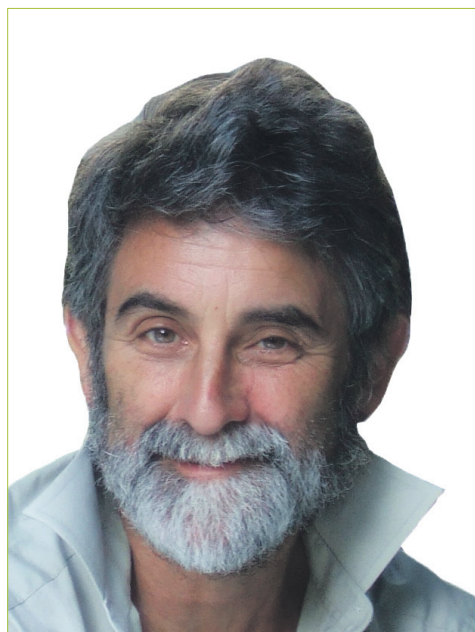
"In a college like this you value every level of achievement; whether that is an academic getting an honour's degree or whether it's a special needs student who learns to live independently. They are all equally valuable."

One particular example sticks in his mind. "One of the staff had a very serious, and I mean life threatening, illness. She was in intensive care for weeks and when she came round from this, she discovered that one of the nurses in the ICU was one of the college's former students who she had actually counselled to go on an access course. And he had gone off and done a nursing qualification and was now a highly qualified intensive care nurse who was helping her to survive this really serious illness. It's not fate, because I don't believe in that sort of stuff, but it shows you how things have a habit of paying off."



## FE Week Experts

## Would we notice if FE was fully privatised?



The recent decision by the Office of National Statistics to label colleges as being in the private sector doesn't change things much. Government is no doubt relieved at confirmation that colleges are part of the wealth creating 'real world' rather than public sector layabouts, and colleges are relieved not to be dragged back into the rigid constraints of Whitehall accounting, but by itself it has little direct impact on day to day practice.

Suggestions that colleges might take a further step and be fully privatised however are potentially more serious and deserve greater attention.

Some have suggested that the involvement of companies run for profit, perhaps through the involvement of private equity houses might be the next big step in the 'liberation' of FE. What might be the costs and benefits?

Many of the advantages claimed for privatisation just don't hold for FE. In the case of public utilities for example it is claimed with some justification that breaking up monopolies and introducing competition sharpened practice and produced a better deal for consumers. Competition however is already pretty fierce in the FE market place and a change of ownership would have little effect. College managers already have to be good to survive.

Another argument, advanced for example in relation to rail or telecommunications is that private ownership brought much needed capital investment that the public purse could not afford. This may be true in other sectors but a lack of capital investment is not top of FE's problems; much more pressing is the threat to the revenue stream needed to support the capital investment already made. Why would a college want more debt?

Privatisation it is said can transfer risk from

the public to the private sector. The theory is elegant but, as the Work Programme is showing, the transfer is hard to effect. If government, as so often, agrees a price that is too generous companies make windfalls; if the price turns out to be tough contractors cry foul or threaten to pull out. Transferring risk means being prepared to let the risk takers fail.

A further reason for privatisation might be to help pay down debt. At first sight selling colleges at a market price sounds rather less daft than giving away schools to cranks and crazies for free. The benefit however would all accrue to the Treasury (apart from the large percentage extracted by the army of consultants needed to set the deals up, and who are probably lobbying feverishly for the change) It is not at all clear what benefit would accrue to the users of FE from such a transfer.

### "The first duty of a private company is to its shareholders"

Would there be any downsides of such a move however if colleges are to all intents and purposes already private? There would seem to be two. The first is that while profit should not be a dirty word if it results from making wise investments, taking risks or injecting a new dynamism into an enterprise there seems very little scope for such beneficial actions to take place.

Profit is far more likely to be found, as in many privatisations, from reducing the wages and benefits of the poorest paid and cutting corners on quality. The first duty of a private company is to its shareholders.

The more important concern though is that currently colleges see themselves and are seen as public assets, dedicated (in both senses) to education and training for the long term. A private company simply seeks to maximise shareholder value wherever it can. Because colleges are public assets they enjoy a privileged relationship with government funders, receiving grant in aid.

As private companies this could not continue. All FE would have to be put out to tender with the attendant instability, rigidity, gaming behaviour and threat to quality that the most privatised parts of the system currently exhibit (look for example at prison education) Government would then have to choose between maintaining quality and having light touch regulation since experience shows that in a privatised system it cannot have both.

*Mick Fletcher is a Further Education Consultant*

## All change to Ofsted inspections in FE

Reflecting on the potential challenges facing colleges and providers as a result of changes in funding, I have given much thought as to how providers might respond and how vital it will be that they are able to evaluate the impact on learners of a sector 'doing more for less' against the criteria that the new framework methodology proposes.

Every college and provider will respond in different ways according to their vision and curriculum offer and 'localism' appears to be a key theme embraced by many. Undoubtedly, some will be affected much more by cuts in funding than others, and all will be considering a number of key questions to explore and evaluate during their self assessment this coming year.

From an inspection perspective, the number one question is always 'What is the quality of the learner's experience, how does the provider know, measure and evaluate this and how do they drive further improvements to that experience?'

With the refining of inspection methodology towards teaching, learning and assessment, some providers may be tempted into not evaluating and valuing the 'wrap around' aspect of all the contributory elements of good and better learning.

With a reducing budget, and efficiency gains required, it will be interesting to see how each provider has responded with strategies for maintaining, and indeed improving, standards.

I am sure providers must be wondering how will inspectors evaluate, judge and report on a wide range of scenarios? For example with colleges, how is it managing the impact of a reduced entitlement on tutorials, pastoral support, and enrichment?

What has been the impact on learners of the strategies and management decisions made? What impact has the withdrawal of the Educational Maintenance Award [EMA] had on learner enrolments and retention and what action has a college taken?

With regard to employability skills and the increased requirements for more work related programmes and job related outcomes, how will providers respond and what should their expectations be?

Plans are well underway to prepare for the new inspection framework, and the sector is eagerly awaiting the findings and decisions made as a result of the Ofsted pilot inspections if my in box is anything to go on.

Providers and additional inspectors are keen to consider the implications of 'no notice' inspections and what the consequences might



be for them both as providers, practitioners and inspectors. It is clear that inspection providers will need to review ways of working with their workforce quite significantly if some of the proposals are implemented in September 2012.

Providers and inspectors will need to ensure that they reflect on measuring the positive impact of partnership working, for example, in judging strategies to engage and retain learners who are or were previously not in education and training [NEET] and how that provision is designed effectively to meet local needs.

With government expectations of increased numbers of 16-18 year old learners staying in full time education and training, inspectors will be evaluating what impact this volume of learners will have on maintaining high standards, and where growth has been experienced, how for example, has the provider managed to find additional apprentices?

Is the provision targeted to local needs and national skills shortages and is what is being offered acceptable and to a high standard?

Inspectors are already in a position of evaluating the complex issue of the impact of minimum contract levels on learners, how the subcontracted aspect to the learner experience has evolved to embrace the expansion and how provider's are refining arrangements to ensure all learners have a positive learning experience.

A nominee commented to me recently and said 'you know Jules; we wouldn't stay in FE if we didn't like continual change'. How true, I thought.

*Julie Wootten, Assistant Director Inspections, Tribal*



## FE Week Experts

# Making the point: international students in FE



Last month the National Audit Office (NAO) released a report on student immigration ('Immigration: The Points Based System – Student Route'), which reviewed the actions of the UK Border Agency (UKBA) to strengthen controls over student migration through Tier 4 of the Points Based System.

Under Tier 4, each student must be sponsored by educational institutions licensed by the UKBA with strict criteria over eligibility to come to the UK, what they can study, with whom and for how long.

The NAO's findings are critical of the UKBA's implementation of Tier 4, concluding that

the points based system for students was implemented with predictable and avoidable flaws, with inadequate action taken to remedy the consequences of the lack of sufficiently robust controls. The report also estimates that, in its first year of operation, between 40,000 and 50,000 individuals may have entered the UK through Tier 4 to work rather than to study.

157 Group Colleges are major providers of education internationally, for international students studying in the UK and overseas. Therefore we were dismayed by recent public exchanges which could be interpreted to be suggesting that the problems the NAO highlighted with student visas lay at the door of FE and other colleges.

Although the NAO report does not make any such implication, we are concerned that any potential misperception of colleges are being compounded through the media to the public and other key influencers.

It is vital that all colleges should be not be bundled together and considered as a higher risk than universities with respect to international student enrolments, especially those at higher levels.

There is no doubt that in the past some private colleges have been less than scrupulous with regards to their handling of non-UK/EU students, but it is not and never has been in the interest of FE colleges

to offer places other than to genuine students. Publicly funded Colleges have their reputations as educational institutions to preserve and have robust systems in place for inward student recruitment, teaching, assessment and monitoring students.

It is undoubtedly true that the UKBA rules have put significant burdens onto FE colleges, like those in the 157 Group, to track and report international student activity and we are increasingly concerned about the number of Colleges who are having their licences revoked, not due to evidence of intentional abuse of the system, but often due to inevitable clerical administrative errors as the burdens increase.

A tiny number of cases of visa refusals, student non-enrolments or non-completions can put the sponsor beyond the minimum Highly Trusted Status (HTS) criteria, yet sponsors have little real control over students' decision-making and extraneous factors that may affect their decisions and visa applications. The criteria are too inflexible and HTS licences are being revoked despite sponsors providing evidence that they have acted responsibly.

The toughness of the criteria plus potential long delays in HTS annual licence renewals leads to instability, with sponsors under stress and unable to plan effectively. When HTS is suspended for between 6 to 12 months it is very difficult for any sponsor to re-enter

the overseas student recruitment market. In essence, suspension of a licence has a terminal effect on Tier 4 activity due to loss of income and reputational damage and may be completely disproportionate to the causes of suspension which may be due to administrative errors or factors beyond the sponsor's control.

We are fully aware of and supportive of the fact that student immigration needs to be carefully controlled and that sponsors have a duty to invest in staff and systems to avoid abuse of the immigration system. However, the rationale behind the constraints placed upon FE colleges and their students, in comparison to universities, is not justified as a mandate for the whole sector.

The current Tier 4 policy and in particular the HTS criteria will lead to the shutting down of international departments in good, well-controlled FE colleges. The impact of this will be a wider distrust of the UK as a destination for overseas students and a reduction in income to the UK currently estimated at £8 billion.

We urge the Government to support the FE sector in appropriate ways so that we can continue to offer international students a rich and rewarding UK educational experience.

*Written by Kate Green on behalf of  
157 Group International Network*

# Apprenticeships and learning from the best



As the National Director of Learning and Skills it is my job to report back to Ofsted and government on any issues within the sector. Recently media interest around the quality of apprenticeships has highlighted concern around subcontracting, short programmes and inadequate assessment practices.

That's why it is so important that we share what is working well so others can learn from it. Ofsted's report *Apprenticeships for young people* sets out how to do that by drawing on evidence from 15 of the best providers of apprenticeships

in England and more than 100 apprentices, to provide a useful guide for trainers, assessors, employers and educational leaders wishing to improve.

The importance of apprenticeships to the nation's future workforce and economy cannot be underestimated. Almost 460,000 people in England began apprenticeships in 2010-11, with just over a quarter under the age of 19. And that number is only going to grow as the government prioritises funding of apprenticeships to help more young people into work and training.

While the majority of learners are completing their apprenticeships, around a quarter are dropping out early. Our research showed learners who had completed meaningful work experience, course tasters and vocational study were more likely to make good progress in their apprenticeship and complete their programme compared to those starting straight from school without it.

While underlining the importance of high quality teaching and learning to support the development of English and maths, employers were clear that carefully organised work experience helped to develop the works skills

they looked for when recruiting apprentices. The report therefore calls on secondary schools to improve the local co-ordination of work experience so willing employers can engage with more potential apprentices.

The report also provides a number of case studies where providers were further enhancing an apprentice's main learning programme. This includes examples from the football Premier League helping to keep their apprentices safe and the hairdressing employer Sassoon motivating learners by offering the chance to assist the in-house creative team at shows and competitions at home and abroad.

Apprenticeships bring considerable value to organisations, employers, individuals and the economy. This is why it is concerning to see that some young people in the report felt they were not always being encouraged to embark on an apprenticeship.

Inspectors came across several examples of bright young people feeling they had been derided by their teachers for wanting to progress to work-based learning, rather than stay on at school. One very skilled hairdressing apprentice related how, on excitedly telling her headteacher she had gained an apprenticeship

with a national hairdressing employer, she was allegedly told: 'Why on earth do you want to waste your time doing that?'

Ofsted inspectors continue to be rigorous in their assessment of the quality of the learners' experience and make clear judgements in published reports on the standards found. But inspection cannot stand still. We are currently working on a new online system to enable learners to feedback views of providers outside inspections, and in doing so, inform the timing of their next inspection.

We are also currently consulting on whether inspections should be unannounced. We currently give between two and three weeks' notice. Giving no notice at all will help us to see providers as they really are and should reduce stress for providers who will not feel under pressure to prepare for the inspectors' arrival.

At their last inspection around 70 per cent of all providers of apprenticeship programmes were judged to be good or outstanding. We are determined to continue to raise standards even further.

*Matthew Coffey,  
National Director of Learning and Skills, Ofsted*



# *FE Week gets technical ~ 2012/13 learner, employer and provider*

This week we have brought together the Skills Funding Agency financial contribution rules for 2012/13

Source: *Funding Rules 2012/13, version 1, Skills Funding Agency: [http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/SFA/Funding\\_Rules\\_201213\\_-\\_Published\\_3\\_April\\_2012.pdf](http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/SFA/Funding_Rules_201213_-_Published_3_April_2012.pdf)*

## **Financial contributions (page 12)**

The purpose of this section is to explain the levels of government contribution that are made towards the cost of a Learner's programme and the rules that Providers must adhere to. In some cases, the Agency will fully fund the cost of

a Learner's programme. In other cases, the Agency will work in partnership with employers and individuals who are expected to contribute towards the costs of learning. This section does not apply to Community Learning or programmes

funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

10. Further details on contributions including those Learners that will be fully supported by the Agency in the costs of their programme can be found at Annex 1.

11. Providers and employers must ensure that all Learners are aware of the Provider's policy on fees and charging.

12. Where the Agency has made a full contribution to the costs of a Learner's programme, Providers must not make compulsory charges to employers or Learners for any delivery of the learning activity funded by the Agency. This includes: administration, registration, assessment, materials or examination costs whether incurred directly by the Provider or charged by other organisations such as awarding organisations. This includes charges for identification passes, uniforms, tools and material where without them, a learner cannot complete and achieve their learning aim.

13. Providers can pass fees or subscriptions charges made by professional bodies in order to become a member of that organisation on to the Learner or their employer if they are aged 19 years old or more.

14. Where, in agreement with the employer or the Learner, the Provider delivers additional or optional services or provision then additional funding may be sought. For example, trips and visits where they are not core to the learning being delivered. Providers must not make it a condition of delivery of a learning aim that additional or optional provision is taken up in order to complete or achieve that learning aim.

15. Other charges outside of learning can also be charged where they do not directly relate to the learning activity, for example, library fines, replacement keys or student ID cards, printing and photocopying outside of learning.

16. Materials used in a learning activity can be charged for if the Learner wishes to keep them outside of the learning environment, for example artwork, models and food.

## **Annex 1 (page 79)**

### **Financial contributions**

31. The following Learners will be entitled to full funding for their learning programme:

- Individuals on Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) for skills training in order to help the individual into work or to remove a barrier to getting the individual into work. This includes units and awards as well as full qualifications. Where there is a joint claim, then both individuals are eligible for fee remission. Where an individual is a dependant of a claimant (but not part of a joint claim or claiming themselves), they are not automatically eligible for full fee remission but they may be eligible under other criteria.
- Learners aged 19 - 23 years of age studying their first full Level 2 qualification

- Entry or Level 1 aims (excluding Basic Skills) where a Learner has an entitlement to a full Level 2 qualification, in that they must have a highest prior attainment of Level 1 or below, but need a step up from basic skills in order to progress to a full Level 2 and are aged 19 - 23 years of age
- 19-24 year old Learners studying their first full Level 3 qualification
- 19-24 year old Level 4 'jumpers' studying their first full Level 4 or above without having attained a first full Level 3 qualification
- Learners studying aims that are Adult Basic Skills Certificates and Functional Skills in English and Maths, excluding Adult Basic Skills Certificates in ESOL, New standalone English and Maths QCF qualifications as they are approved for funding in 2012/13
- Trade Union representatives studying Trades Union Congress (TUC) learning aims
- An individual studying their first full Level 3 qualification that has left the British Armed Forces after completing four or more years of service or have been medically discharged, due to an injury in active service, after completing basic training.
- An individual who has not reached GCSE level C or above in English and Maths undertaking GCSE English and Maths.
- Unemployed individuals who are in receipt of a state benefit (other than JSA or ESA (WRAG)), who want to enter employment and need skills training to do so are, at the discretion of the Provider, eligible for full funding for units and other learning aims that will help the individual into work or removes a barrier to getting the individual into work.
- Classroom-based ESOL provision will only be fully funded for those who are on JSA, ESA (WRAG) or unemployed and on a state benefit, where it is identified as a barrier to employment.

32. Learners continuing an aim or aims from 2011/12 will continue to receive the fee remission as established in 2011/12. This only applies to continuing aims or programmes. For example, a Learner progressing from an Intermediate Apprenticeship to an Advanced Apprenticeship is 'continued' learning and not 'continuing' and, therefore, the changes would apply to the new programme.

33. LDD Learners who have a learning difficulty assessment (LDA) and have not completed the learning programme identified in that LDA as meeting their needs when they reach the age of 25 during the Academic year 2012/13 will receive full funding to complete that programme in the following circumstances:

- a. where the learner is placed at an Independent Specialist Provider (ISP) the Learner had a Learning Difficulty Assessment which confirmed that the Learner's needs could only be met by the ISP
- b. the Learner is following a programme of learning which is identified in their LDA as meeting their needs and they cannot complete before reaching their 25th birthday because of an unavoidable delay in the Learner commencing the programme
- c. learners will continue to make progress on the programme.

### **Employer Contributions in Workplace Learning**

34. All 16-18 Apprenticeships will be fully funded by the Government for their learning programme.

35. All 19+ Apprenticeships competency and technical knowledge qualifications will be co-funded. The Government contribution will be 50 per cent. The Government contribution towards Key, Functional Skills or GCSEs within an Apprenticeship will be 82.5 per cent.

36. Providers are reminded that expected employer contributions in Apprenticeships can be made in the form of cash or via contributions to the delivery of the activity (for example, by the use of the employers' own staff, premises, materials and/or equipment in the delivery of the Apprenticeship). This paragraph does not apply to Joint Investment Programme funding.

37. The employer contribution is mandatory where the learning is defined within scope of State Aid or is funded through the Joint Investment Programme. The Provider must be able to evidence that the employer has made their contribution.



# Employer and government contributions

## Government Contributions for Learners aged 19 years and older (page 83 and 84)

2012/13	Unemployed on active benefits or wider offer to unemployed	19-23 year old	Classroom based		Workplace learning Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Less than 250 employees		Workplace learning Large employer● 250 employees or more	
			24+, without a first Level 2	24+ qualified to Level 2 or above	24+, without a first Level 2	24+ qualified to Level 2 or above	24+, without a first Level 2	24+ qualified to Level 2 or above
Stand alone units Excluding Basic Skills	Fully funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded
Adult Basic Skills English and maths	Fully funded	Fully funded	Fully funded	Fully funded	Fully funded	Fully funded	Fully funded	Fully funded
ESOL	Fully funded	Co-funded (classroom)	Co-funded	Co-funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded
		Not funded (workplace)						
Progression Funding (Entry & Level 1 vocational and PSD aims)	Fully funded	Fully funded* (classroom)	Co-funded	Co-funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded
		Fully funded* (vocational Level 1 only, workplace)						
Full Level 2	Fully funded	Fully funded (for those without a Level 2)	Co-funded	Co-funded	Co-funded	Co-funded	Not funded	Not funded
		Co-funded (with Level 2 or above, classroom)						
		Co-funded (with Level 2 or above, workplace SME only, otherwise not funded in workplace)						
Other Level 2	Fully funded	Co-funded (classroom)	Co-funded	Co-funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded
		Not funded (workplace)						

\* Fully funded if the Learner has not attained Level 2 and needs the additional step up from basic skills in order to progress to a full Level 2, otherwise co-funded

● Large employer in the context of eligibility (reduction in funding still applies to employer 1,000 employees or more)

2012/13	Unemployed on active benefits or wider offer to unemployed	19-24 year old	Classroom based		Workplace learning Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Less than 250 employees		Workplace learning Large employer ● 250 employees or more	
			25+, without a first Level 2	25+ qualified to Level 2 or above	25+, without a first Level 2	25+ qualified to Level 2 or above	25+, without a first Level 2	25+ qualified to Level 2 or above
Full Level 3	Fully funded	Fully funded (for those without a Level 3)	Co-funded	Co-funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded
		Co-funded (with Level 3 or above, classroom)						
		Not funded (with Level 3 or above, workplace)						
Other Level 3	Fully funded	Co-funded (classroom)	Co-funded	Co-funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded
		Not funded (workplace)						
Full Level 4 or above <sup>1</sup>	Fully funded	Fully funded (for those without a Level 3)	Co-funded	Co-funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded
		Co-funded (with Level 3 or above, classroom)						
		Not funded (with Level 3 or above, workplace)						
Apprenticeships (all Levels)	Not funded	Co-funded (workplace)	Not funded	Not funded	Co-funded	Co-funded	Co-funded	Co-funded

● Large employer in the context of eligibility (reduction in funding still applies to employer with 1,000 employees or more).

<sup>1</sup> Non-prescribed HE only



# FE Week campus round-up

## Skilled students go head to head at City College Southampton's industry week



They are the future stars of industry in the south and last month they joined forces to learn more about life in the workplace.

Hundreds of students across marine, construction and electrical courses took part in City College Southampton's industry week, which saw them work on hands-on and competitive activities to prepare them to go directly into work.

One of the most competitive activities of the week was the toughly-fought wall competition - in which bricklayers, carpenters and painters and decorators worked in teams to construct part of a bathroom.

The competition was judged by Leadbitter, which has been heavily involved in the week and supporting students with advice.

Andrew Kaye, director of studies for engineering and construction, said: "This week has been a great success and students really have honed those extra skills that are so vital in securing a job once they leave college.

"While learning practical skills, gaining technical knowledge and securing qualifications are a vital part of what we do at City College, we also place a lot of emphasis on helping students boost their employability skills and stand out from the crowd in the competitive jobs market."

## Kensington and Chelsea student makes judge's head turn on BBC's The Voice UK



Excitement was at fever pitch at Kensington and Chelsea College after student Ruth-Ann St Luce impressed some of the biggest names in the music industry to secure her spot on BBC1's prime time show 'The Voice'.

Ruth was watched by more than 8 million people on Saturday night as she performed a moving rendition of Leona Lewis's 'Run' to an all-star panel of Tom Jones, Jessie J, will.i.am and Danny O'Donoghue.

Unlike other talent shows the celebrity panel sit facing away from the acts and can only hear

them. If the stars like what they hear, they have to hit their buzzer and turn their chair around - at which point they get to see the person.

Within moments of taking to the stage 18-year-old Ruth inspired global superstar, Jessie J to turn her chair.

Clearly moved by the teenager's audition Jessie J said: "I couldn't sing like that when I was that age. I am here to work on someone that I think could be phenomenal and I think she is definitely that."

Now a firm contender in the fight to be crowned the UK's next great voice, Ruth is getting ready for her once in a lifetime opportunity to be coached by Jessie J as she battles to win the show.

Ruth, who is studying for her Level 2 diploma in music, said: "I am just so overwhelmed right now...all my dreams are full of being a successful artist - I feel like it's meant to be."

The talented singer has already shown her versatility and star quality in several college music performances in front of industry names including award winning English rap star Akala.

Head of music at the college, Paul Hall said: "Ruth is a shining example of what can be achieved with the right attitude, dogged determination and a thirst to learn. She has an incredible talent and everyone at the college knows she has what it takes to go all the way."



## Derby College students to aid police and security forces at local Olympic torch relay

More than 120 students from Derby College will be working with official security personnel and Derbyshire Police to ensure the safety of participants and spectators of the Olympic Torch Relay through the city in June.

Students, who have all undergone stewarding and door supervisor training as part of their public services' course at Broomfield Hall, will be acting as marshalls along the route as the

torch relay weaves through the streets of Derby and then out of the city the following morning to start the next leg of its journey.

Public services lecturer Edwin Watkins, who has led on the Bridging the Gap programme at the college, said: "We are delighted our students have been given this once in a lifetime opportunity to be involved in the torch relay in Derby."



## Solihull College sees soccer stars' success

Two talented sports students from Solihull College have won scholarships to study in America after impressing top colleges with football skills.

Jade Nash and Georgia Jones, who first met whilst playing for the under 10s at Solihull Borough FC, are currently in their final year of the BTEC Extended Diploma in Sport (Coaching, Development & Fitness) at the college's Blossomfield Campus.

Jade (17), from Solihull, will be studying Sports Medicine at Hutchinson Community College in Kansas.

She said: "I always knew I wanted a sports-related career and I'm really excited about moving to America, where I can develop my football skills further whilst studying for my degree."

Georgia (17), from Solihull, has won a scholarship to study Physiotherapy at Converse College in South Carolina.

She said: "This is a dream come true and I can't wait! I love playing football and I'm really pleased to have got a scholarship to America where I'll be able to train every day."

## West Thames College students put on hair raisingly good show



Students put on a colourful show in front of proud parents.

The first year students on West Thames College's BTEC makeup design and hairstyling course put on a showcase event at the college's Isleworth Campus.

Choosing a style from the Elizabethan period to the 1960s, the talented students spent two months researching the costumes and makeup of their chosen era before showcasing their results to the public at their first ever live event.

As part of their studies, the students had to plan the showcase from scratch which included creating mood boards and research portfolios, finding models, inviting guests, organising posters and generating publicity.



## Pershore College plants orchard on campus



**H**undreds of new apple trees were planted in the Worcestershire sunshine at a college.

More than 40 people turned up to Pershore College to plant the estimated 260 Cheerfull (corr) Gold trees in the college grounds.

The trees were donated to the college, which is part of Warwickshire College, by Dr Theresa Huxley to create a trial orchard which will see students being responsible for the maintenance and production of the orchard.

The new orchard will also be an excellent opportunity for the students to learn about and care for the growing fruit trees.

Julia Page, assistant principal (Land-based) at Warwickshire College, said: "We had an excellent day planting the new fruit trees here at Pershore and I am extremely grateful for the help we have received from all the volunteers who joined us.

"I would also like to thank Dr Huxley for the kind donation of the trees which will be a great asset to the college and our students in years to come."

## Pat on the back for Rotherham College student

**A** student at Rotherham College of Arts and Technology has shown true animal instinct after winning a place at one of England's top veterinary schools.

Stefanie Wallace (20), who finishes her BTEC Level 3, Animal Management course in June, has been accepted to study at the state-of-the-art School of Veterinary Medicine and Science through the University of Nottingham.

She said: "The course at college has been fantastic and the tutors have been so supportive by giving me the confidence to go and get the career of my dreams. I will miss it here, especially all the animals I have grown attached to."

Her tutor, Andrew Jonas, said: "She has put a huge amount of hard work in to her studies and has gained work experience with over 18 different animal-based placements, so she really deserves the best. I'm very proud of her."



When asked which animal she was going to miss the most at the college, Stefanie said: "Luna the cow is definitely my favourite.

"She is so gentle and loves all the attention from the students, I will miss her."

## Weston College student takes extreme course



**A** Weston College apprentice was sent by her employers on an adventurous personal development course - an extreme sports scholarship in Tzaneen, South Africa.

Carla Spencer skydived 14,000 metres, jumped from a waterfall, took part in water sports, camped in Blyde Canyon, stroked a cheetah, held a scorpion and was kissed by an elephant.

The 18-year-old said: "The course was the most amazing experience. The sky dive and waterfall leap were terrifying but thrilling as well.

"We bathed in hot pools while baboons walked around us, went caving and visited an orphanage. It was a fantastic experience."

Carla travels more than four hours every day to reach Alanbrookes in Writington, North Somerset, where she has been an apprentice since September.

She attends Weston College to study as well and aims to become a qualified chartered accountant.

Carla said: "I decided against university because many friends who graduated could not find work. I don't mind the travel and I love Weston College."



## Waltham Forest College's flair for fashion

**M**ore than 100 students from Waltham Forest College showed off their creative flair on the catwalk in front of friends and family. Nearly two hundred people attended the Total Look Hair and Beauty Show, in the college's new Learning Resource Centre which was transformed into a fashion cat-walk.

Judge Emma Grayling, senior stylist with Toni&Guy, said: "I was so impressed with what I saw, it was more like a professional competition.

"Competitions like this are important as they allow students to show how far they have come,

and really explore their creativity."

The winner of the Level 3 Hairdressing competition was mature student Keerati Davidson.

Her model Mira Majerikova showed off a flamboyant fruits and flowers ensemble, which took two months to create.

She said: "I spent a while creating this piece and just went with the flow to see what I could do. It is very very heavy, but I wanted to create a look that was dramatic fun and quirky. I'm very pleased with the outcome."

## Havering College student bakes well



**H**avering College student Charlotte Cook has risen to the challenge in a competition to make a cake celebrating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

The 16-year-old has created a spectacular street party scene demonstrating her exceptional skills and knowledge of cake decoration and sugar craft.

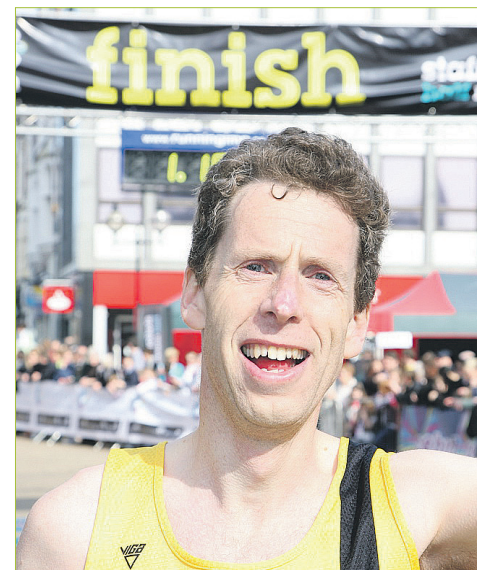
The teenager, from Stapleford Abbots in Essex, is passionate about baking and patisserie.

She said: "I've made my Queen's Diamond Jubilee cake in my own time.

"It's a rectangular fruit cake and I've decorated it with icing to make it a traditional street party table complete with Union Jack, tablecloths, bunting, food and all the miniature plates and drinks.

"I've even made the chairs and lampposts from which the bunting hangs. It has taken me about 10 days.

"I love making cakes. It started when I was little making cup cakes. Now I just dream of having my own cake shop."



## Marathon man at South Cheshire College

**A**sports tutor has notched up another success in his running career after finishing runner-up in the Stafford Half Marathon.

South Cheshire College lecturer Chris Hollinshead was roared on by supporters in his home town to cross the finish line in one hour, 14 minutes.

The 46-year-old won the event in 2006 but proved he still had the legs to fend off the challenge of some of the young guns who entered the race.

Chris is a member of the Stafford Harriers Running Club and has his sights set on the London marathon in April.

Chris said: "The course is quite undulating so it was tiring but I was very pleased to finish runner up.

"It was a great feeling because a lot of local people came out to support me which means a lot."



*FE Week events...*

# Putting the HE in FE at AoC Conference

**Nick Reinis**

*@fenickr*

Debate surrounding the introduction of FE loans for adult learners has been a prominent part of the sector in recent months.

And at the Association of Colleges' (AoC) Annual HE in FE Conference at Holiday Inn London Kings Cross last month it was no different.

After all, the impact of the system, introduced for the 2013/14 academic year, with learners applying from next March if they are over 24 and studying at level 3 or higher, on a students' progression into higher education is somewhat unknown.

This unfamiliar territory was addressed at the conference by Caroline Neville, senior policy advisor at the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) - although she assured delegates that work is being carried out to align the HE and FE systems.

She said: "If you going to have to take a loan out for your Level 3 and Level 4 and then you're going to go on and secure other responsibilities in terms of HE loans, that might put you off.

"We don't yet know the impact, but there has been an enormous amount of work I have to say.

"I very often sit next to the lead on loans in further education who works hand in glove with HE colleagues to try to make sure the two systems are aligned.

"They are not the same. But there are important considerations to ensure you haven't got a loan system for FE that is totally different in its criteria for HE.

"There has been research in terms of focus groups and lots of research face-to-face and survey research on when the policy is explained, what would your decision be? It's only research but it has been encouraging."

Mrs Neville said ministers have asked for Access to HE enrolments to be "very closely" monitored by the Department, particularly "because it's aimed at mature students to see if there's an impact on enrolments".

She also said that a task group has been set up to monitor the "unintended consequences" of the introduction of FE loans.

"Very interestingly, after years of decline, the last couple of years, certainly two years,

enrolments to Access have had a 22 per cent increase I think.

"I accept the recession and all of those things will mean more people may come to college, but you would want to continue to support Access," she added.

The subject was also addressed by the Business Secretary, Dr Vince Cable, who described the FE loan system as "breaking new ground".

He added: "We don't know how it's going to work.

"But I think it's important in principle to recognise that people doing vocational training at that level should be treated in the same way as those doing an academic degree and that will involve over the next couple of years."

Away from FE loans, another discussion point at the conference was the core and margin places.

Last month, Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) announced that more than half of student places, with tuition fees of less than £7,500, had been handed to FE colleges.

## "There are contradictions in the current policy environment in higher education"

A total of 20,000 were divided between 190 universities and colleges - with 9,643 places distributed between 35 higher education institutions (HEIs) and 10,354 places between 155 FE colleges.

Although Sir Alan Langlands, the chief executive of HEFCE, could not say how many places would be available in the future, he did confirm that the system is "not just for Christmas."

He said: "The margin for this year, the redistribution of 20,000 students, is not somehow just a pulse that will move through the system and stop.

"This is forever. So my takeaway message

is core and margin 12/13 is not just for Christmas, it's something to take into the future."

Dr Cable also brought up the subject during his conference address, when he said: "What we have tried to do in government is to try to free up the higher and further education system from regulatory controls at the centre.

"One of the mechanisms is the core margin which is taking places away from higher education institutions and opening them up to bids from some universities, the lower end of the cost range, and FE colleges.

"This year was the first experience of that."

Discussions at the conference also evolved around the need for HE and FE to work with each other, despite areas of competition.

Sir Langlands said: "The current changes and uncertainties in HE and FE policy do give rise to tensions.

"We have a strong and a diverse tertiary education system in this country and we need to work through these tensions.

"Sometimes that means competition at the boundary between higher and further education and other times that means collaboration."

He later added: "The job of HEFCE and the other national agencies is that HE in FE has to be handled on a level playing field with other provision.

"That doesn't always come naturally.

"There are contradictions in the current policy environment in higher education and contradictions in the boundary between HE and FE.

"I guess the overall message is let's not be too fussy in just patrolling these boundaries but try to get across these boundaries," he said.

Mrs Neville, meanwhile, described "higher vocational education" as a "developing and important area", adding: "Developing in it has a long history...and important in terms of the nation's needs; the needs of the economy, balancing the economy, and social mobility."

Mrs Neville also said that the recent HE White Paper was "the first time that further education was mentioned in a significant way".

She said: "HEFCE's publications have been very high profile in terms of further education's role.

"White Papers have tended to be about universities and of course this was too, but

it also made that very strong point about diversity of provision going forward and the role of further education was acknowledged."

Dr Cable said the HE in FE "issue is an important one" for two reasons.

He said: "It relates to something I've been committed to since I took up this job and that's breaking down the boundaries between higher and further education and between academic and vocational, although they are not exactly the same issue, they overlap to some degree.

"There was an unfortunate apartheid in post school education, a sense of hierarchy that I thought was unhealthy, and what we are trying to do is re-balance and give vocational education its proper value and further education its proper value.

"Part of that is ensuring the boundary between higher and further education becomes blurred."

He added: "We want to build in that flexibility into system.

"Many FE colleges are very innovative and thinking of new ways of delivering, taking into account cost convenience and types of pupils, and all my experience in this job is that FE colleges in general are extraordinarily exciting and innovative places and I always get uplifted when I visit one at the things that are happening."

Another key point of the conference was discussed by Andy Youell, the director of standards and development at Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA), who gave an update on the Key Information Set (KIS), which will be implemented from September.

He said: "The KIS is a key part of the government's strategy in terms of opening up the market; providing potential students with objective information to inform decision making.

"Now that students are at the heart of the system and the funding is determined on where the student goes, a student needs solid reliable information on which to base their investment decision."

He added: "As things currently set out, the KIS should be generated for every undergraduate course of more than one full-time equivalent (FTE); so it can be full-time and it can be part-time courses but anytime that lasts for more than one FTE."

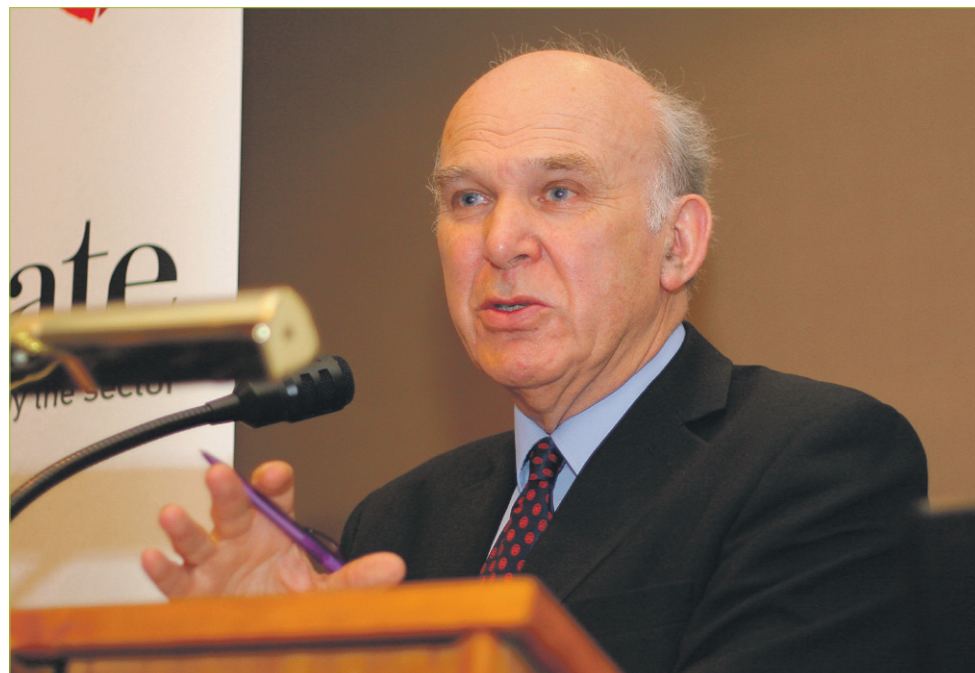


There was a huge turnout for the AoC Annual HE in FE Conference, held at the King's Cross Holiday Inn

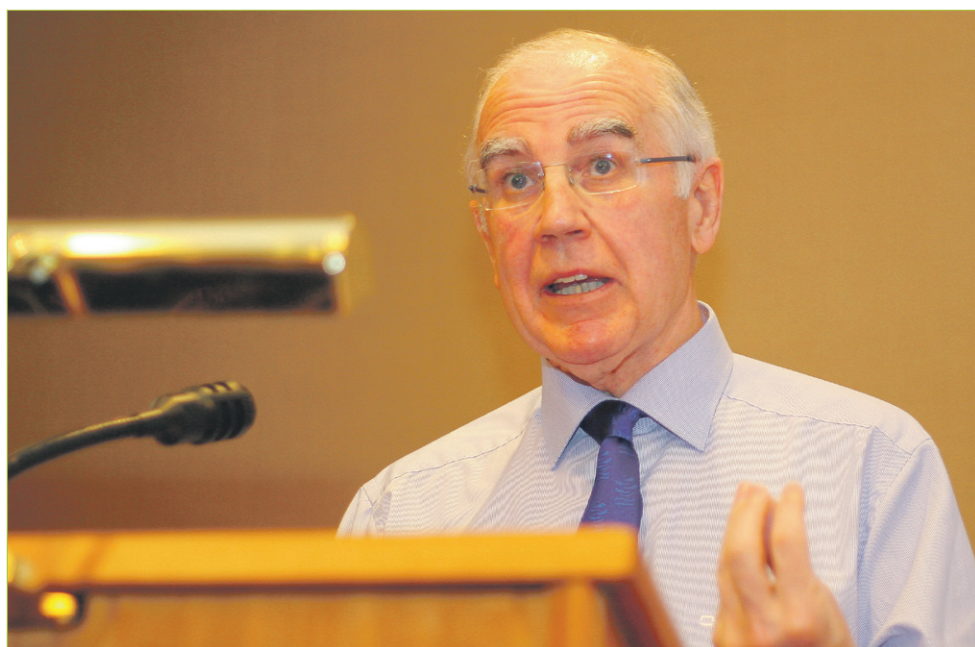




Caroline Neville, Senior Policy Adviser, BIS



Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, Vince Cable



Sir Alan Langlands, Chief Executive, HEFCE



Andy Youell, Director of Standards and Development, HESA

# Tracking progression of apprentices to HE

New research is being used to monitor and track the progression of apprentices into higher education (HE).

Led by the University of Greenwich, the research is funded by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and comes on the back of previous research which has looked at students from 2005/06 and beyond.

Speaking during a breakout session at the conference, Hugh Joslin, project director at the university, said: "Progression rates for vocational learners and apprenticeships are low.

"HEFCE invested millions in lifelong learning networks and in Aim Higher to try and raise progression rate of non-traditional students.

"Some headway has been made, but when we look at progression rates of apprenticeships it's a good news story, but we still need to do a lot of work."

The project takes four cohorts of learners and looks at those progressing directly into HE the next year, or leaving it a year or even another year.

Previous studies have suggested the progression rate from FE to HE is around six per cent, but Mr Joslin said: "What we have found for the 2005/06 cohort, tracked over four years, that figure is 13.1 per cent.

"Signs are, when we track again this year and have another four years, that will be increased again - it's very positive."

He also explained the North East has the highest rate, with 16.3 per cent progressing to HE, while East of England has the lowest, with nine per cent going into HE in the four years after completing apprenticeships.

Meanwhile, 20 per cent of apprentices who progress into HE live in disadvan-

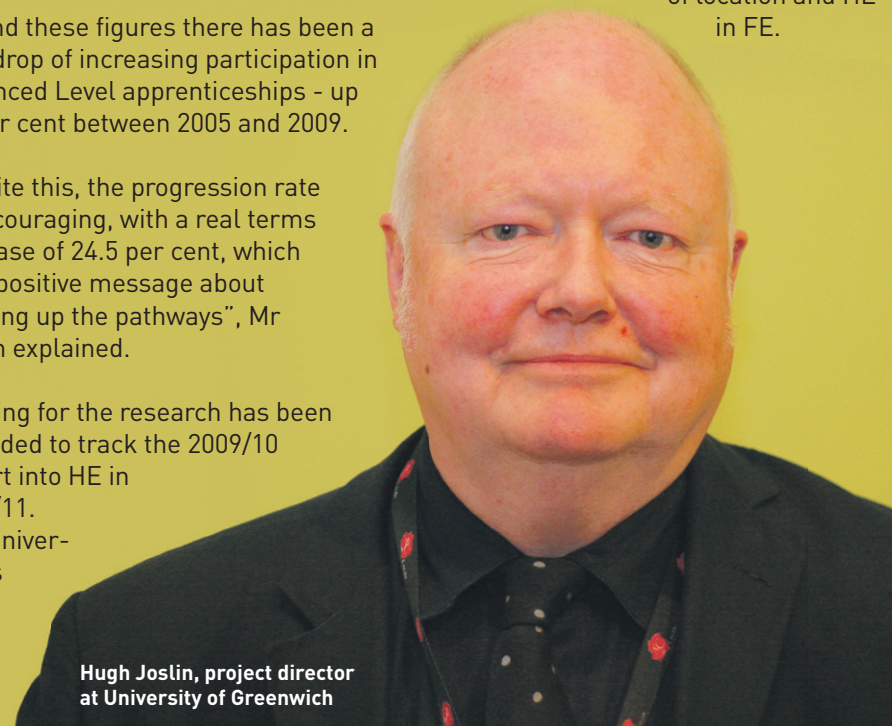
tagged areas, compared to 15 per cent of young HE entrants. Mr Joslin said: "That gives an important message about social mobility."

Behind these figures there has been a backdrop of increasing participation in Advanced Level apprenticeships - up 36 per cent between 2005 and 2009.

Despite this, the progression rate is encouraging, with a real terms increase of 24.5 per cent, which "is a positive message about opening up the pathways", Mr Joslin explained.

Funding for the research has been extended to track the 2009/10 cohort into HE in 2010/11. The university is also

"looking backwards" to see how apprentices have progressed from Level 2 to Level 3, while it will also look at more fields, breakdowns of location and HE in FE.



Hugh Joslin, project director at University of Greenwich





## Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality

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Norton Radstock College is looking to recruit a dynamic and highly motivated person to join the Executive of this lively, student-centred College, firmly rooted in the local community.

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**Expected interview date: 8 May 2012**

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### The Role:

- Financial and operational leadership; working as part of the College's senior leadership to deliver and support the strategic objectives of the College, within a fast changing environment.
- To be responsible for the College's financial planning, accounting and financial stability; ensuring a robust framework of financial management and contract compliance.
- To be responsible for the performance management of the broader resource functions in particular; Estates and Facilities, Human Resources, ICT and management information teams.

### The Candidate:

- Significant senior level experience of directing the finances of a business or organisation of comparable scale and complexity, with an understanding of Board level reporting.
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We are working in partnership with College Leadership Services on this important appointment. Please contact Helen Anderson for an application pack: [handerson@collegeleadership.co.uk](mailto:handerson@collegeleadership.co.uk) or 0115 911 1117, or visit [www.collegeleadership.co.uk/current\\_appointments.asp](http://www.collegeleadership.co.uk/current_appointments.asp) for further information about this post.

The closing date for this post is 12pm on 20th April 2012. Interviews will be held on the 14th and 15th of May 2012.

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please email: [jobs@feweek.co.uk](mailto:jobs@feweek.co.uk) or call 0208 1234 891





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- MO26 Assistant Manager - Sports & Public Services 22.04.12

#### Support

- S585 College Assistant - 0.7 Human Resources 15.04.12

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- Teacher - Professional Cookery (Hourly Paid)
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- Teacher - Physics (Hourly Paid)
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You should have proven experience of managing a number of curriculum areas, measuring and bringing about improvements in quality assurance, teaching, learning and student success. We are looking for an inspiring leader that can motivate, encourage and support staff to deliver an exceptional learning experience. A good knowledge of FE curriculum, quality and student services is essential.

For full information and details on how to make your application please visit our website at [www.nescot.ac.uk](http://www.nescot.ac.uk) and click on 'Working at Nescot'.

**Closing date: Wednesday 25th April 2012 | Interviews: Tuesday 1st May 2012**



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**Closing Date: Noon on Thursday 19th April**



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This is an exciting career opportunity for a current or aspiring Principal. The Governors are looking to appoint an individual with demonstrable visionary leadership qualities, a talented strategic thinker and innovator and an individual who has strong business and resource management skills. North Lindsey College enjoys a high profile both nationally and internationally. The College occupies a large site in Scunthorpe and is very accessible. Several of its operations have been peer referenced as 'world class'. Last year it launched its new STEM Academy with great success and has a strategy in place for significant growth capacity. A medium sized College with mixed economy, it is the only 'Outstanding' post-11 provider in the county of North Lincolnshire.

If you have the vision, skills and experience to make a success of this outstanding opportunity then we want to hear from you.

North Lindsey College is an equal opportunities employer.

We are working in partnership with College Leadership Services on this important appointment. Please contact Helen Anderson for an application pack: [handerson@collegeleadership.co.uk](mailto:handerson@collegeleadership.co.uk) or 0115 911 1117, or visit [www.collegeleadership.co.uk/current\\_appointments.asp](http://www.collegeleadership.co.uk/current_appointments.asp) for further information about this post.

You are also welcome to discuss the post with the current Principal, Professor Roger Bennett, on 01724 294001.

The closing date for this post is 12pm on 20th April 2012. Interviews will be held on the 9th, 10th and 11th of May 2012.

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### FE Week Sudoku challenge

		7	5			4	6	
1		2		8	4			
5				7			1	2
	3			9				1
	1	4	3		6	8	5	
8				5			7	
9	8			6				4
			8	4		1		3
	7	1			9	6		

Difficulty:  
**EASY**

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

Solutions: Next week

	8						3	
	3		9		6		4	
1		2				8		7
		3	8		4	6		
		8	1		9	4		
2		5				1		8
	9		6		2		7	
	7						5	

Difficulty:  
**MEDIUM**

### Last Week's solutions

9	3	6	1	2	5	8	7	4
2	5	8	9	4	7	3	6	1
7	1	4	3	6	8	5	9	2
4	8	3	5	7	6	2	1	9
5	2	9	8	1	4	7	3	6
6	7	1	2	3	9	4	5	8
1	6	5	7	8	2	9	4	3
3	9	2	4	5	1	6	8	7
8	4	7	6	9	3	1	2	5

Difficulty:  
**EASY**

7	4	8	3	1	2	9	6	5
3	2	1	5	9	6	4	7	8
9	5	6	4	7	8	3	2	1
8	1	4	7	2	5	6	3	9
5	9	7	1	6	3	8	4	2
2	6	3	9	8	4	5	1	7
6	3	9	2	5	7	1	8	4
1	8	2	6	4	9	7	5	3
4	7	5	8	3	1	2	9	6

Difficulty:  
**MEDIUM**

### FE Week mini-mascot

Follow the adventures of *FE Week's* biggest and smallest fan!



*"Mostly this week I have been doing a spot of bank holiday gardening"*

You can also follow our *FE Week* mini-mascot on Twitter [@daniellinford](https://twitter.com/daniellinford)